3: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1932
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

126 English translation between the lines of dialect, and adding notes in explanation of anything that was obscure. I thus have a large collection of texts in the dialect spoken at Kurtatchi, which proved of the greatest service to me in studying the language for practical use in the field, and could, if required, be utilised for comparative purposes. I [197] am not concerned with linguistic problems in the present paper, but I may perhaps mention that while the vocabulary of the Kurtatchi dialect differs widely from that of Petats, there are certain similarities of construction, both being of Melanesian stock. Unfortunately, every small group of villages has a dialect of its own, so that whenever I worked outside the immediate vicinity of my own village I was obliged to have recourse to Pidgin English again.

128 I have endeavoured to make the translation as literal as 198 possible, even to the point of crudeness, whether I have translated from the native dialect or from Pidgin English. Perhaps it is worth while to point out that Pidgin English, as used in that portion of the South Sea Islands with which I am acquainted, makes frequent use of constructions based on those of native speech, and is capable, within certain limitations, of representing the original with reasonable accuracy both as to form and spirit. It is therefore a not altogether inefficient medium in which to work. The style of the stories differs somewhat with different narrators, some joining their sentences more freely than others, and some showing great fondness for the repetition of long or short passages, a device common to tellers of folk-tales among all peoples.

121 There can be no question that the collecting of such stories is a very valuable tool in the hands of the field worker. Apart from the interest shown by the natives in the telling of them, and their value as linguistic material, the subject matter often suggested to me lines of enquiry which, when followed up, either at the conclusion of the story or at a more convenient season, as circumstances

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538 while the practice of areca nut chewing occurs in almost all of them, there is no mention of tobacco, now the invariable and constant concomitant of a native's day.

128 538 I have arranged my stories rather roughly into ten classes according to the main subject dealt with. In common with all folk-tales, one story will frequently combine several motifs, and consequently might equally well be put under any one of two or more headings, but the general trend is, as a rule, fairly clear. Some tales proved, on comparing different versions, to be portions of longer narratives, and it is only too likely that many others are actually incomplete. Where I have several versions of the same story, I have given what seems to be the most complete and coherent, but in no case have I pieced out a tale told by one person with material from a version given by another.

The titles of the tales have been arbitrarily given by myself, merely for convenience of reference. The tellers always plunged into the story without preamble. There is no conventional beginning, corresponding to " Once upon a time ". The conventional ending for all tales is " Kapa " in the Petats dialect and " Mikin " in the Kurtatchi dialect. This simply means " Finished ". Sometimes it will be " Mikin ge ? " which might be translated " That's all, isn't it ? "—a kind of appeal to the audience as to whether the story has been told correctly.

128 I have chosen a typical story to illustrate each of my ten classes. Possibly the first three might have been thrown together.

Class I. Culture-Hero Stories.

538 773 Probably the most interesting, from the ethnological standpoint are those stories which deal with the doings of culture-heroes, from whom the people consider themselves to be descended and to have derived their clan or other divisions, and other essential features of their culture. There are several tales of this type in my collection, gathered